DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 072 007 **SP 006 012**

AUTHOR	Shapiro, Stewart B.; Shiflett, John M.
TITLE	Loss of Connectedness During an Elementary Teacher Training Program.
INSTITUTION	California Univ., Santa Barbara. Dept. of Education.
SPONS AGENCY	Ford Foundation, New York, N.Y.
PUB DATE	Apr 72
NOTE	10p.
EDRS PRICE	MF-$0.65 HC-$3.29
DESCRIPTORS	*Elementary School Teachers; *Perception; *Student Teachers; *Teacher Attitudes; *Teacher Behavior; Teacher Education

ABSTRACT

This study investigates the effects of awareness training on the attitudes and behavior of elementary school student teachers. To determine causes for a decrease in connectedness in the teacher training experience, 10 clinical interviews with 10 ex-student teachers were conducted in 1971-72, the first two academic periods following teacher training. Open-ended interviews were guided by five questions. Results indicated five explanations for the loss of connectedness: excessive overall workload, the shock effect of shattering illusions about the profession of teaching, unrelated academic work at the University, competition, and relationship of master teacher to student teacher. Recommendations indicate a need for periodic attitude-testing before, during, and after teacher training and several years into the teaching experience in order to investigate the shifts in trust which were hypothesized by the ex-student teachers. A 19-item bibliography is included. (MJM)

55

Revised

ED 072007

LOSS OF CONNECTEDNESS DURING AN ELEMENTARY TEACHER TRAINING PROGRAM

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
OFFICE OF EDUCATION
THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRODUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGINATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT OFFICIAL OFFICE OF EDUCATION POSITION OR POLICY

Stewart B. Shapiro and John M. Shiflett

Department of Education

University of California

Santa Barbara

April 1972

SP 006 012

Introduction

Among the basic needs and concerns of man which have attracted the attention of the man on the street as well as philosophers, educators, and social scientists of diverse orientations, one of the most profound is a sense of community, solidarity, cohesion, relatedness, belongingness, connectedness, or, expressed negatively, estrangement and alienation from others (4, 5, 16, 17, 19). Fromm (6) gives one of the broadest expressions of the importance of this dimension for human personality.

> The necessity to unite with other living things, to be related to them, as an imperative need on the fulfillment of which man's sanity depends. This need is behind all phenomena which constitute the whole gamut of intimate human relations, of all passions which are called love in the broadest sense of the word. (p. 30)

In the past ten or fifteen years there has been an ever increasing dialectic on socialization vs. content learning as primary goals of higher education in this country and abroad. Increasingly, the functions of graduate and professional schools have been drawn into this debate and, in particular, certain alienating effects of graduate education have recently been noted by Sanford (14), Reisman and Jencks (13), Heiss (10), Adelson (1), among numerous others.

As a part of the general phenomenon of the dehumanizing or socially alienating effects of higher education observed by the above writers, some of these effects have also been noted in the field of teacher education. Studies by Weaver (18), and Muuss (12) have highlighted some of the differential effects of academic work, practice teaching, and teaching experience on teacher attitudes. Apparently some of these experiences have an unintended alienating effect on the participants. From a remedial or treatment standpoint, the work of Schmuck (15), Carkhuff (3), Gazda (7),

Hefele (9), Berenson (2), and many others have demonstrated that systematic training in human relations improves both relationships and competence of classroom teachers with their students. However, many of these programs do not particularly emphasize affiliation, community, or the connectedness of the training group itself. Positive group affiliation and interpersonal trust do not appear to be among their major outcome variables.

The work of Mazer and Engle (11), with counselor training institutes, does, however, stress the importance of interpersonal contact and group identification. "Group critiquing sessions [revealed that] participants generally reacted favorably to courses and professors. However, the feature of the program that they identified as having greatest salience was simply their frequent and intensive contacts throughout the year -- participation in an ongoing group was a major vehicle for personal growth." (p. 280) The regular (control) and Institute (experimental) programs differed primarily in this socialization dimension.

This study was an investigation of an incidental finding from an original study on the effects of awareness training on the attitudes and behavior of elementary school student teachers.[1] A statistically significant decrease in "connectedness" was found for both experimental and control groups. This finding was challenged statistically to determine retesting effects and artificially high initial scores.(8) The evidence indicates that the observed change was due to experiences indigenous to the teacher training program and not to statistical artifacts.

---

[1]This research was supported by the DRICE (Development and Research in Confluent Education) project at UCSB, George I. Brown, director, under Ford Foundation Education Research Grant No. 700-0411. R. Murray Thomas and John W. Cotton have contributed helpful comments on an earlier draft of this paper.

Clinical Findings

In order to determine what there was in the teacher-training experience that might account for a decrease in connectedness, ten clinical interviews were conducted by Shapiro with ten ex-student teachers in the fall and winter quarters of 1971-72, the first two academic periods following teacher training. The sampling of the individuals interviewed was biased by the factors of availability and time limitations. For example, all the subjects interviewed were still in the Santa Barbara area and all of them had jobs as elementary teachers. Half were men and half were women as compared with only 17% male in the total sample. Also, the post-test scores of the clinical group were somewhat lower than those of the remainder of the sample, although the differences were not statistically significant. However, in spite of sampling errors and their unknown effects on clinical responses, the proportions of those interviewed drawn from the original experimental group and both control groups very closely approximate the proportions of each group in the original study.

Open-ended interviews were guided by the following questions, in the order indicated:

1. "What were your overall impressions of the fifth-year elementary teacher training program?"

2. "Who were the most helpful and the least helpful teachers?"

3. "What is your overall evaluation of your practice teaching experience?"

4. "How did you feel about the tests (C-Scale and two others) you were given?"

5. After being informed of the statistically significant loss of

connectedness and reminded of the types of items in that scale, the interviewees were asked: "How do you account for these results?"

In accounting for the results, the subjects were encouraged to explore their own interpersonal relationships (with peers, authorities, pupils, parents, etc.) and to make some observations on the varying levels of trust and affiliation of their fellow student-teachers.

All of the ten teachers interviewed appeared to be very cooperative and quite open in their responses to the questions. Most of them did not consider the major finding a loss of trust as surprising and all of them were able to offer several explanations, regardless of the changes or levels of their own scores. They also appeared to quite easily recollect the significant details of their experience while in teacher-training.

The following are the major explanations offered by the clinical subjects to account for loss of connectedness during the academic year:

1. The overall work load became excessive, especially at the end of the year. The practice teaching plus academic work produced severe strain, tension, and near exhaustion in many of the student teachers. This factor was mentioned as a major influence in reducing connectedness by 8 of the 10 clinical interviewees.

2. The "shock effect" of shattering illusions about the profession of teaching was also mentioned by 8 of the 10 respondents. Great expectations and naive fantasies about the absolute trustworthiness of pupils, peers, parents, master teachers, administrators, professors, etc., were said to be reflections of over-idealism and immaturity. Nearly all of the ten respondents saw the fifth year program as a reality-testing experience from which the student teachers emerged with a more realistic view about what to expect from other people.

3. Many of the clinical subjects also felt that some of the academic work at the University was unrelated to practical classroom use. A significant part of the course work was regarded as paper-oriented rather than experience-oriented, much as undergraduate work was for them. Many felt it was the same old "Mickey Mouse stuff" in contrived rather than real situations, with too much educational jargon and impractical theory. Furthermore, many people resented being torn in two directions, practice teaching (the real world) vs. academic work (the unreal world). Especially, they appeared to resent the time and energy being taken away from practice teaching and diverted to certain irrelevant course work. This was also viewed as a contributing factor to the work overload mentioned above.

4. Competition in its many facets was also prominent in the list of reasons given to account for loss of connectedness. The respondents felt they had to compete to get into the program in the first place and that they were competing for grades, especially during the last quarter. They also felt that they had to "do or die" in one year, that the job market engendered fierce competition, and that there developed a definite in-group out-group resentment between the experimental and control groups.

5. The final factor mentioned with regularity was the relationship of master teacher to student teacher. While nearly all of the ten respondents felt very good about their master teachers, many were aware that some of their peers had difficulty with master teachers, and that the student teachers felt extremely vulnerable to, and dependent on, their master teachers. This dependency related to learning the essential skills of teaching as well as the crucial evaluations by the master teachers. It was as though the master teachers became too important in the teacher training program and this, along with the other factors, produced loss

of connectedness, according to the interviewees.

All of the clinical subjects from the experimental group reported that the awareness training was very helpful for their teaching as well as for their personal growth. They all said that they had developed close, trusting relations with their colleagues in the experimental group and with most of the leaders of the awareness training. However, this experience apparently was not sufficiently powerful to overcome loss in connectedness as measured by the scale.

The dominant explanation to account for the statistical results, revealed to the clinical subjects in question five, also took into account the revealed finding that experienced elementary school teachers, in at least one sample in the Santa Barbara area, scored higher in connectedness than the group in this study, before and after the fifth year program. The following hypothesis was formulated by the clinical subjects themselves. Simply stated, it is that the fifth year program decreased trust due to the "shock effect" and the need of student-teachers to adjust to realistic expectations of other people. Experienced teachers on the other hand, were thought to have already gone through this reality testing phase, didn't expect so much of others, and were therefore able to trust them more.

The above hypothesis rests on the assumption that one very important component of trust is predictability and that violation of expectancies reduces trust. Thus, most of the clinical subjects were not surprised by the loss of connectedness finding and seemed to feel that it was a temporary stage of necessary growth.

Conclusions

This study suggests a program of periodic attitude testing before, during, and after teacher training and several years into the teaching

experience in order to investigate the shifts in trust which were hypothesized by the ex-student teachers. If loss in connectedness turns out to be merely a stage in the development of a teacher, then no significant changes in teacher training would be indicated. If, on the other hand, loss of trust appears as a dysfunctional concomitant to teacher preparation as now commonly constituted, then the training experiences should be restructured to eliminate aspects which unnecessarily diminish the capacity of the beginning teacher to engage with others with realistic and appropriate levels of trust.

References

1. Adelson, Joseph. "The Teacher as a Model." The American College: A Psychological and Social Interpretation of the Higher Learning. (Edited by Nevitt Sanford.) New York: Wiley and Sons, 1964.

2. Berenson, D.H. "Effects of Systematic Human Relations Training upon Classroom Performance of Elementary School Teachers." Journal of Research and Development of Education 4:70-85; Winter 1971.

3. Carkhuff, Robert R. Helping and Human Relations: A Primer for Lay and Professional Helpers. Vols. 1 and 2. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1969.

4. Durkheim, Emile. The Division of Labor in Society. New York: Free Press, 1964.

5. Fantini, Mario, and Weinstein, Gerald. Making Urban Schools Work. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1968.

6. Fromm, Erich. The Sane Society. New York: Rinehart & Company, 1955.

7. Gazda, G.M. "Systematic Human Relations Training in Teacher Preparation and Inservice Education." Journal of Research and Development of Education 4:47-51; Winter 1971.

8. Guilford, J.P. Fundamental Statistics in Psychology and Education. New York: McGraw-Hill, 1956, p. 438.

9. Hefele, T.J. "Effects of Systematic Human Relations Training upon Student Achievement." Journal of Research and Development of Education 4:52-69; Winter 1971.

10. Heiss, Ann M. Challenges to Graduate Schools. San Francisco: Jossey Bass, 1970.

11. Mazer, Gilbert E., and Engle, Kenneth B. "Personality and Attitude Change in Counselor Trainees: An Evaluation." Counseling Education and Supplement. Vol. 10, no. 3; Spring 1971.

12. Muuss, Rolf E. "Differential Effects of Studying versus Teaching on Teacher Attitudes." Journal of Educational Research 63:185-189; December 1969.

13. Reisman, David, and Jencks, Christopher. "The Viability of the American College." The American College: A Psychological and Social Interpretation of the Higher Learning. (Edited by Nevitt Sanford.) New York: Wiley and Sons, 1964.

14. Sanford, Nevitt. Where Colleges Fail: A Study of the Student as a Person. San Francisco: Jossey Bass, 1967.

15. Schmuck, Richard A. "Helping Teachers Improve Classroom Group Processes." Journal of Applied Behavioral Science 4:401-435; 1968.

16. Seeman, M. "On the Meaning of Alienation." American Sociological Review 24:782-791; 1959.

17. Simpson, Elizabeth L. Democracy's Stepchildren. San Francisco: Jossey Bass, 1971.

18. Weaver, D.C. "The Effects of the First Year of Teaching on Teacher Attitudes to the Professional Element in their Initial Training Course." British Journal of Educational Psychology 40:352; November 1970 (Abstract).

19. Weinstein, Gerald, and Fantini, Mario. Toward Humanistic Education. New York: Praeger Publishers, 1970.